

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

OCTOBER 12, 2010

Reporting Aggregate and Trend Data on Child Deaths

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has been unable to provide the Board of Supervisors (Board) with basic statistical information on children's deaths in Los Angeles County. Such information is vital to sound decision making by both the Board and DCFS.

DCFS has acknowledged that record keeping, formatting issues and other problems have thus far prevented DCFS from presenting a clear, consistent statistical picture of child deaths over time.

Although data on the number of deaths, circumstances and causes are available for the current year and recent years, there is apparently no such comprehensive information available prior to 2008. The Board and DCFS require such aggregate data to assess short-term and long-term trends. Detailed case information, such as names and addresses could remain private for confidentiality requirements.

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It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to make thorough policy judgments without such information. One cannot determine, for instance, if a year-to-year spike in child deaths is due to numerous fatal shootings of teenagers or a spate of infants dying in their homes. Nor is it possible to spot geographic trends that could affect resource distribution.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

Direct the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Department of Children and Family Services and County Counsel, to compile vital Los Angeles County child death statistics from 1990 to 2010 including, but not limited to:

1. The total number of deaths of children with prior DCFS history;
2. Age, area of residence and area of death location of the children;
3. Cause of death and circumstances;
4. Abuse or neglect status;
5. Alleged perpetrator in homicides;
6. DCFS status and placement at time of death;
7. Race/ethnicity of the child; and
8. Indication of whether one or both parents were minors at the time of the child's birth.

This report is due in 14 days.

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